DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 127 CE 084 787

AUTHOR	Smith, Rebekah J.; Deprez, Luisa S.; Butler, Sandra S.
TITLE	Parents as Scholars: Education Works. Outcomes for Maine Families and Implications for TANF Reauthorization.
PUB DATE	2002-03-00
NOTE	21p.; Produced by Maine Equal Justice Partners. Prepared for the Alliance for Family Success. Support for this project was received from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Ford Foundation grant), Center for Law and Social Policy (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation project), the Catholic Campaign for Human Development-Diocese of Portland, National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, Stern Family Fund, and the Unitarian Universalist Fund for a Just Society. Photographs and quotes not available/readable in print copy, but may be viewed online.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.mejp.org/PDF/pas.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Historical Materials (060) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Students; Child Care; *College Attendance; Education Work Relationship; Employment Patterns; Federal State Relationship; Fringe Benefits; Nontraditional Students; Outcomes of Education; Parent Student Relationship; *Parents; Participation; Postsecondary Education; Program Content; *Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Role of Education; Salary Wage Differentials; Self Esteem; *Social Services; State Programs; Student Financial Aid; Transportation; Two Year Colleges; *Welfare Recipients; Welfare Reform
IDENTIFIERS	Cash Assistance Programs; *Maine; Reauthorization Legislation; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

ABSTRACT

Maine's Parents as Scholars (PaS) program provides parents who are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) with cash assistance and support services while they attend a two-year or four-year postsecondary degree program. PaS participants receive the same cash benefits and access to support services as TANF recipients receive. They also receive support services critical to their success in school, including assistance with childcare, transportation, and car repairs. Individuals enrolled in PaS must attend classes full-time for the first 24 months. Beyond 24 months, they must choose between adding 15 hours per week of worksite experience to their full-time school schedule or participating in a total of 40 hours of class time, training, study, and worksite experience per week. PaS is funded with state maintenance of effort dollars. PaS has proved highly successful. PaS graduates earn a median wage of $11.71 per hour after graduation compared with their median of $8.00 per hour before entering college. PaS graduates are also more likely to be offered sound benefits packages than are welfare leavers without a degree. Nearly 90% of PaS graduates have already left TANF. PaS has also been shown to improve PaS participants' self-respect and confidence and to raise their children's aspirations. (MN)

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ED 475 127

Parents as Scholars: Education Works

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A publication of
Maine Equal Justice Partners

Prepared for
The Alliance for Family Success

March 2002

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Acknowledgements: *Maine Equal Justice Partners would like to thank the Ford Foundation, which provided funding for this publication with a grant through the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. We also extend our appreciation to the following funders for their support of our educational campaign around welfare reform issues in Maine: Center for Law and Social Policy (through a project of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation), the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, the Stern Family Fund and the Unitarian Universalist Fund for a Just Society.*

The authors would like to thank Mark Greenberg and Julie Strawn of the Center for Law and Social Policy, Lisa Pohlmann and Judy Robbins of the Maine Center for Economic Policy, and Christine Hastedt and Mary Henderson of the Maine Equal Justice Partners for their help in the preparation of this report.

Photos: Christine Hastedt, Rebekah J. Smith, Sasha Hayes-Rusnov
Design: DESIGNsmith

The Maine Equal Justice Partners is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that represents the interests of low-income people in public policy forums on issues such as access to health care, welfare reform, food assistance, education and training and child care. Maine Equal Justice Partners conducts research, policy analysis, advocacy, impact litigation and education and outreach on public assistance programs.

The Alliance for Family Success is a broad coalition of organizations committed to improving the financial security of low-income families in Maine. The Alliance is working to educate policy-makers about the need to respect the dignity of families and help families move out of poverty as the nation's welfare program undergoes reauthorization.

Founding Organizations

Maine Equal Justice Partners
Maine Women's Policy Center
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods

Supporting Organizations

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Parents as Scholars: Education Works

OUTCOMES FOR MAINE FAMILIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TANF REAUTHORIZATION

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"Who would dispute that education is the great equalizer in our society that can give every citizen in our nation -- regardless of race, gender, income or geographic background – the same opportunity to succeed?"[1]

United States Senator Olympia Snowe

"I grew up on welfare. My mom was single, raising five kids. Then I nearly dropped out of high school when I myself became a mother at 16. I had just started college in 1996 when welfare reform began. I was terrified that I was going to have to drop out, take a low-wage job, and never get my degree. I heard a lot about work, nothing about school, and I felt like all the odds were stacked against me. I feel really lucky that I lived in Maine where people agreed that education should be part of welfare reform. The day that I graduated, my eight-year-old daughter walked across the stage with me. I felt so proud." ***Heidi Hart, Former Parents as Scholars Participant, 2001 University of Southern Maine Graduate***

Heidi Hart

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Principal Positive Outcomes for Parents as Scholars Graduates

- **Parents As Scholars (PaS) Graduates Earn a Median Wage of $11.71 Per Hour After Graduating, Compared to a Median of $8.00 Per Hour Prior to Entering College.** This means that PaS graduates increased their wages by nearly 50% by obtaining a college education. In contrast, a recent survey determined that the median hourly wage of welfare leavers in Maine who have not obtained a post-secondary degree is $7.50.

- **PaS Graduates Are More Likely to be Offered Sound Benefits Packages Than Welfare Leavers Without a Degree.**

  - 71.4% of PaS Graduates Take Advantage of Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance. Only 56.1% of those who left welfare in Maine without a post-secondary degree are even offered employer-sponsored health insurance.

  - 60.7% Receive Paid Sick Leave. Only 36.9% of those who left welfare in Maine without a post-secondary degree are offered paid sick leave.

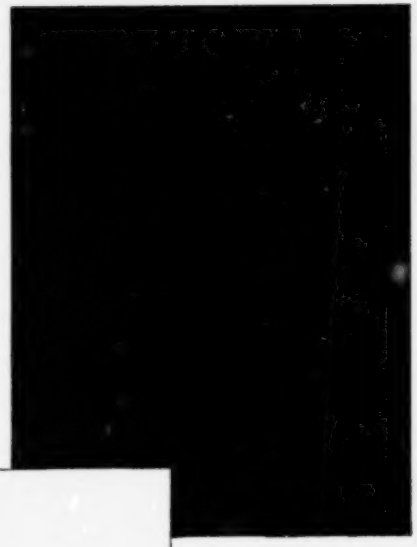
  - 67.9% Receive Paid Vacation Time. Only 57.1% of those who left welfare in Maine without a post-secondary degree were offered paid vacation time.

- **PaS Graduates Leave Welfare Behind: Nearly 90% of Working Graduates Have Already Left TANF.** And indicators are strong that they have left welfare permanently.

- **PaS Graduates Performed Very Well in College: Their Median Grade Point Average Was 3.4.** A full 90% of PaS graduates maintained a grade point average over 3.0.

- **PaS Participants Experience Improved Self-Esteem and Well-Being.** The overwhelming majority reported that they gained self-respect, confidence, and a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

- **The Children of PaS Participants Raise Their Aspirations, Ensuring that the Cycle of Poverty and Welfare is Broken Permanently.** As one PaS graduate stated:



MAINE'S PARENTS AS SCHOLARS PROGRAM

When Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in the summer of 1996 it sent a clear message to the states that immediate entry into the workforce was expected for families receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). Investment of federal TANF dollars in educational efforts were strongly discouraged. For the most part, education would no longer "count" as meeting the mandatory work requirement under the new TANF law. Fearing that many students would have to abandon their dreams of obtaining a higher education and escaping poverty, the State of Maine responded by creating the Parents as Scholars (PaS) program with state dollars separate from TANF.

This paper describes Parents as Scholars in the context of welfare reform, reports on recent research showing profound improvements in the lives of PaS graduates, and discusses the policy implications of these findings in light of the upcoming federal reauthorization of TANF. It concludes that support for higher education for low-income parents promises long-term economic security for these families and that federal policies should encourage and support efforts by states to promote access to higher education for low-income families.

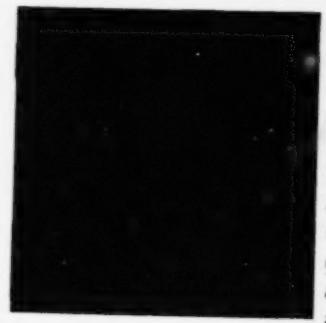
Maine's Parents as Scholars program provides parents who are eligible for TANF with cash assistance and support services while they attend a two or four year post-secondary degree program. PaS participants receive the same cash benefits and access to support services as TANF recipients. Support services address a wide range of needs and are designed to provide PaS participants with the support critical to their success in school, such as child care, transportation, and car repairs. PaS does not provide tuition assistance except in limited circumstances. In those rare situations, tuition assistance is limited to $3,500 per academic year.[2]

The entrance criteria for the program are straightforward. If a person is eligible for TANF, does not have a marketable bachelor's degree, and has matriculated into an undergraduate two or four year degree program, the person will be admitted into PaS if an assessment determines the following: first, that the individual does not possess the necessary skills to obtain employment that will enable them to earn 85% of the state's median wage for a family of the same size; second, that the post-secondary education sought will significantly improve the ability of the participant's family to be self-supporting; and third, that the individual has the aptitude to successfully complete the proposed post-secondary program.[3]

Once an individual is enrolled in PaS, for the first 24 months of participation she is expected to attend classes on a full-time basis unless there is good cause to limit her attendance to less than full-time.[4] Beyond 24 months, a participant must choose between adding 15 hours per week of work-site experience to her full-time school schedule or taking part in a total of 40 hours a week of class time, training, study, and work-site experience.[5] For every hour that a participant spends in class, she is allotted 1.5 hours of countable study time. When a PaS participant enters her final semester, activities such as resume preparation,

employment research, and interviewing count as participation. A PaS participant must make satisfactory academic progress by maintaining a 2.0 grade point average in order to continue in the program.

When creating PaS, the Maine legislature limited enrollment to 2,000 participants, but for numerous reasons the program has never been fully enrolled. When post-secondary students on TANF were transferred into PaS in 1997, approximately 800 students made the transition. As of September 2001, 795 students were participating in the program. Similar to states across the country, Maine's welfare caseload has dropped dramatically since welfare reform was enacted.[6] While the number of PaS participants is approximately the same as it was when the program began, the percentage of PaS participants as a proportion of the state's TANF population has increased significantly. As a percentage of the total TANF caseload, PaS enrollees increased by over 50% between 1997 and 2001.



PaS is funded with state maintenance of effort (MOE) dollars. To receive their full federal block grants, states are required by PRWORA to continue to spend 75% to 80% of the state dollars they had been spending on the precursor program to TANF, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. States have considerably more flexibility in spending their MOE dollars than they do with federal block grant dollars, although, at least in Maine, the MOE funds are far more limited in amount. States can structure their expenditure of these MOE dollars to support activities they want to encourage, like post-secondary education, without harmful effect to their federal work participation rate. Maine's ability to utilize its MOE funds flexibly made PaS possible.[7]

Against the Tide: PaS in the National Context

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 very clearly adopted a "work first" philosophy to welfare reform, judging that quick entry into a job, even a low-paying position or an unpaid work site, was the best method for families to achieve self-sufficiency. Higher education was generally not allowed as a countable work activity except for one year of vocational education for a capped portion of TANF recipients. PRWORA significantly increased the work participation rates" states are required to meet,[8] while substantially narrowing the definition of what counts as a work activity.

In response, most states simply eliminated educational activities from the options available to TANF recipients preparing for employment. Activities such as "up front" job searches and volunteer work placements designed for quick entry into the workforce took the place of more substantial education and training programs. As a result of these changes, thousands of low-income parents across the country lost the opportunity for an education that would help raise their families out of poverty. Nationally, the percentage of welfare recipients engaged in school activities declined by more than half, from 5.8% in fiscal year 1996 to 2.7% in fiscal year 1999.[9] Levels of post-secondary enrollment for welfare families fell anywhere from 29% to 82% in individual states.[10]

Maine's story is very different. For fifteen years prior to PRWORA, Maine offered post-secondary education as an option to families receiving public assistance. When the federal welfare reform law passed, Maine looked for a way to continue this successful practice, which led many low-income families with children out of poverty. With broad bipartisan support, the Maine legislature agreed to use its state MOE dollars to create the Parents as Scholars program and continue its longstanding commitment to education as a route out of poverty.

PARENTS AS SCHOLARS OUTCOMES: IMPROVED ECONOMIC SECURITY, INCREASED SELF-ESTEEM, AND HIGHER ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN

In December 2001, researchers sought to measure the outcomes for PaS graduates, surveying a group of 127 PaS participants they had contacted a few years earlier. This paper reports on the first 54 (42.5%) of the returned surveys, 34 of which were from individuals who had graduated.[11] In addition, the Maine Center for Economic Policy conducted a survey of adults who were receiving TANF at some point during the first six months of 1997 ("2001 TANF Parent Survey").[12] Of the 748 respondents, 475 were "leavers," individuals who had been receiving TANF in the first 6 months of 1997 but were not receiving TANF in January 2001. A comparison of the outcomes for the two sets of individuals provides insight into the positive changes experienced by PaS graduates as compared to others who have left TANF. The results attest to the life-altering benefits of post-secondary education for low-income families.

> *"We are proud of the Parents as Scholars program. It is an important part of our welfare reform strategy and one that leads to higher wages for its participants. The ability to use federal block grant dollars for this program would give us more flexibility in the overall design of our welfare reform effort and ensure that this program continues."* ***Kevin Concannon, Commissioner, Maine Department of Human Services***

Economic Security

Parents as Scholars graduates are finding employment easily: 28 out of the 34 (82.4%) PaS graduates who responded to the survey were employed in a variety of occupations. They are nurses, electricians' assistants, directors of medical records, residential counselors, project assistants, employment specialists, and juvenile drug court managers to name just a sampling. Of the six graduates who were not employed, three had already left TANF. The three who remained on TANF were attempting to overcome barriers related to disabilities, special needs children and affordable child care in order to work. In contrast to the high employment rate for PaS graduates, welfare leavers without a degree experience an employment rate of only 68.2%.

PaS graduates' ability to find good jobs comes as no surprise given that Parents as Scholars participants perform remarkably well in school. PaS participants achieved a median grade point average of 3.4 with 90% maintaining grade point averages above a 3.0.[13]

Higher Incomes

The degree to which incomes improved in both amount and level of security for PaS graduates is remarkable. The survey responses indicated that prior to entering the program, PaS participants earned a median wage of $8.00 per hour. After they graduated, however, PaS participants' hourly wages increased to a median of $11.71 per hour[14] - an increase of nearly 50%. By obtaining an education, PaS graduates are able to earn wages that allow them to be financially secure and raise their families out of poverty.

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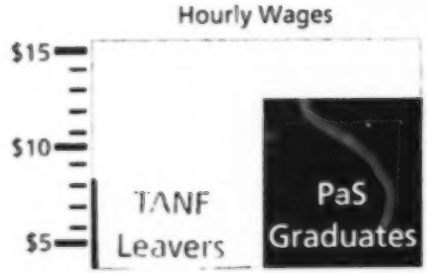
Individuals who leave welfare without a post-secondary degree, however, earn a median hourly wage of only $7.50. Thus, PaS graduates are earning a median hourly wage that is 56% higher than that earned by welfare leavers without a degree. A PaS graduate working 40 hours a week at the median wage of $11.71 per hour will earn $8,757 more per year than a welfare leaver without a college degree working 40 hours a week at the median wage of $7.50 per hour.

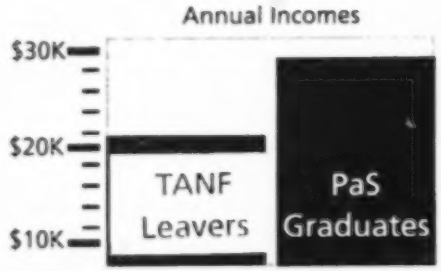
It is of note that many of the Parents as Scholars college graduates reported a salaried income as opposed to an hourly wage, indicating that their jobs were more economically secure and provided professional opportunities. Their salaries extended as high as $53,000 per year. The welfare leavers without college degrees, on the other hand, were concentrated in the low-wage sector of the economy, typically earning wages only slightly above the official poverty line and well below a standard that would provide economic security for their families.

The finding that income increased dramatically for PaS graduates is consistent with national data. The Federal Reserve has found that "education levels played a key role in determining economic success . . . across education groups: mean income grew between 1995 and 1998 only for families headed by individuals with at least some college education . . . Median income between 1989 and 1998 rose appreciably only for families headed by college graduates."[15] A 1998 national study reviewing wage trends over the past few decades revealed that real wage gains were 20.3% for women with college educations as opposed to 8% to 9% for women with high school degrees only.[16]

Another study concluded that "achieving a bachelor's degree . . . increased women's annual median income by as much as 71 percent."[17]



Median hourly wage of working PaS graduates compared to TANF leavers without post-secondary degrees.



Annual income of working PaS graduates working at median hourly wage compared to annual income of working TANF leavers without post-secondary degrees working at median hourly wage.

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Better Benefits

Nearly all working PaS graduates, 92.9%, reported that they were offered benefits packages through their employer. Almost three-quarters (71.4%) of PaS graduates are enrolled in employer-sponsored health care coverage for themselves or their family. In the 1999 survey of PaS participants, the vast majority, 82.2%, reported that their last jobs before entering college had not included employer-sponsored health insurance. Only 56.1% of the leavers without college degrees responding to the 2001 TANF Parent Survey were even offered employer-sponsored health care coverage. In addition to health care, 64.3% of the working PaS graduates responding to the 2001 survey participated in dental plans offered by their employer.[18]

In addition, 67.9% of the working PaS graduates reported that they received paid vacation time and 60.7% received paid sick time. By comparison, only 57.1% of leavers without a post-secondary degree received paid vacation time at their job and only 36.9% were offered paid sick time. Additional employment benefits reported by PaS graduates included life insurance, disability insurance, compensatory time off, mileage reimbursement, and eye care.

Greater Independence and Improved Economic Stability

As a result of their increased earnings and improved economic stability, almost all of the working PaS graduates who answered the 2001 survey had left TANF. Twenty-five of the 28 working graduates were earning sufficient wages to leave TANF completely. Of the three remaining on TANF, two continued to receive some benefits while working part-time (one who worked in a specialized field was having difficulty finding full-time work and another worked part-time while caring for her two special needs children) and one, who graduated in December 2001, was beginning her new full-time job and preparing to transition off TANF. Although the PaS survey allows us to draw only a snapshot-in-time picture, indicators are very strong that this group has left TANF permanently.

Even when the economy enters a downturn, education provides protection.[19] Research has proven that during a recession "women are less likely to return to welfare if they have college degrees, that education can protect workers from losing their jobs during recessions, and that economic downturns have the greatest impact on workers with the least education."[20]

Moreover, PaS graduates are better equipped for jobs in the new economy. The last quarter century of United States history has seen a decline in relatively well-paid manufacturing jobs for low-skilled workers.[21] In conjunction, there has been an increase in low-wage service sector jobs for lesser-skilled workers as well as an increase in high-wage jobs requiring college or graduate degrees.[22] Numerous studies have shown that the majority of welfare recipients do not have the education and skills required by most employers.[23]

The 2001 TANF Parent Survey results indicate that 31.8% of the respondents who were leavers without a post-secondary degree were unemployed. Among those, 45.3% had earned only a high school degree, while just 4.7% had a two year college degree and only 2.3% had obtained a four year degree. Thus, leavers responding to the 2001 TANF Parent Survey with only a high school education were more than six times more likely to be unemployed than leavers with post-secondary degrees.

The 2001 TANF Parent Survey also showed that nearly 1 in 5 of the respondents who were TANF leavers had gone off but been forced to return to welfare during the 1997 to 2001 period before leaving again. In addition, nearly 1 in 10 leavers had left and returned to TANF more than once during that period.

PaS graduates, however, are far more likely to avoid having to return to welfare because women with any education beyond high school have a 41% better chance of avoiding a return to welfare than those who do not complete high school.[24] One researcher has concluded that education "is more important in maintaining welfare exits than is contact with the labor force prior to entering welfare."[25]

PaS graduates nearly universally state that their lives have been greatly improved and that they feel economically secure, many for the first time in their lives. Here are some of their comments:

"By earning my Bachelor's degree, I have become self-sufficient. I was a waitress previously and would never have been able to support my daughter and I on the tips that I earned. I would encourage anyone to better their education if possible."

"I have a 100% positive outlook on what I can do for myself. I was a single mom for about 6 years and had to rely on charity (state). I wasn't able to afford extra activities for my children - definitely not for myself. Since I've started working, I gradually became self-reliant and have not needed outside help with child-care, clothes, or vehicle expenses. I'm also able to pay my bills regularly, buy sufficient food, and pay for my children's activities."

"This program has allowed me to become financially self-sufficient. If I was not able to participate in this program I would still need assistance. I am very happy with my life as it is now."

As a group, these college graduates will help to increase Maine's per capita income, which was $24,603 in 1999, compared to the national figure of $28,542.[26] Studies reveal that across the nation, the percentage of adults with a four year college degree is the lead indicator of a state's per capita income, accounting for 51% of the differences in per capita incomes across the 50 states.[27] In 1999, Maine's rate of individuals with a four year college degree was only 19.2% compared to the national average of 24.4%.[28]

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In Maine, employment data reveal that 27.3% of the jobs existing in 1998 required at least some post-secondary training and 24% actually required post-secondary degrees. By 2008, it is predicted that 28.5% of jobs in Maine will require a minimum of post-secondary vocational training and 25.1% will require at least a post-secondary degree.[29] It has also been forecast that in 2006, 32% of all 6 million new jobs created in the nation that year will require a bachelor's degree and 37% of all new jobs will require some post-secondary education.[30]

Increased Self-Esteem

When asked how undertaking post-secondary education affected their feelings about their lives, opportunities, and relationships, PaS participants nearly unanimously reported enormous positive changes. Increased self-esteem, greater confidence and feelings of well-being, and improved ability to parent were oft-repeated themes. The 1999 survey of PaS participants recorded similar themes; "for most respondents, returning to school was an overwhelmingly positive transformative experience."[31] Although many respondents to the 1999 survey explained feelings of anxiousness when they began classes, "nearly all reported that this melted away as they met the challenges of higher education and often exceeded their own expectations. Many respondents reported a feeling of independence and liberation as a result of their participation in post-secondary education."[32]

National research confirms these reports. One study found that low-income women who go to college feel "a tremendous sense of accomplishment – 75% expressed satisfaction with their jobs and with their lives."[33] Many women who obtain post-secondary education "mentioned the benefits of the increased respect they received from family members, positive changes in their personal development, and improved ability to develop close relationships."[34]

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These are some of the PaS participants' responses to the 2001 survey regarding how their experiences impacted their self-esteem:

"By going to school and being retrained I earned back my self-respect and dignity."

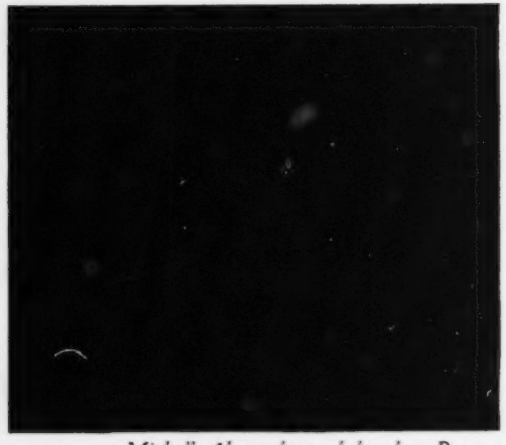
"I have gained self-esteem and confidence in myself - knowledge is power. It is a good example for my children to see me work so hard for something like this. They are proud of me and I am proud of myself."

"Going to school has made a huge impact in my self-esteem. I feel like I now have the power to control the direction of my life and my girls' lives. It has given me self-empowerment while teaching my girls the value of education and that they can do anything they want to."

"Returning to college was one of the best decisions I ever made. It certainly built my self-esteem. I was an A-B student all through college. I had no idea that I could do so well."

"When I signed up for welfare, I was struggling to make ends meet, sleeping on my friend's couch while my infant daughter stayed with family members so I could hitchhike back and forth to my low-wage job. When I left welfare, however, I had a college degree and a ticket to greater economic security thanks to the Parents as Scholars program. That experience inspired me to continue my education and I subsequently earned my master's degree in social work. As a direct result of the help I received from Parents as Scholars, I am gainfully employed in rewarding work with people with severe mental illness in the community. Not that long ago, I saw no way out of poverty. I felt completely helpless and depressed most of the time. Now as I watch my daughter grow up, I am proud of our accomplishments and feel secure in my ability to provide for her. I am full of hope about our future."

Michelle Alexander, Former Parents as Scholars Participant, 1999 University of Maine Graduate



Michelle Alexander and daughter Rowan

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Heightened Aspirations for Children

Yet another positive result for individuals participating in PaS is that their childrens' aspirations rise, making it even more likely that their families will leave poverty, and welfare, permanently behind. Other studies have recorded similar experiences for low-income parents who attend college; parents report that "they and their children had studied together and that a college education was now a goal for the children. Many of the children, having visited their mothers' campuses frequently, or attending campus child-care centers, felt far more comfortable in this environment than had their mothers when they started college."[35]

It has been widely documented that when single parents obtain a college education, their efforts directly impact their children's ambitions and abilities: "Post-secondary education for low-income mothers not only increases family income but also increases parental expectations of children's achievements and children's education ambitions."[36] In fact, "both qualitative and quantitative studies show that higher levels of parental education lead to early development of language and reading skills and raise the likelihood of children's school success."[37]

"My two sons respect me for working so hard to go to college. They've gained renewed interest in their own school work as education has become a higher priority in our household. And I know that they are more likely to pursue their own college educations now." ***Angela Walton, Current Parents as Scholars Participant, University of Maine at Augusta***

Angela Walton with sons Garrett and Sage

National literature confirms that "the more educated a woman is, the better her children's early language and reading skills, and the greater the likelihood that her children will be successful in school."[38]

Here are some of the 2001 PaS survey respondents' thoughts on the impact of their education on their children's goals:

"I have grown as a person and can now be very proud of myself as well as my children. Two of my children were on the honor roll in school and they have expressed that it is due to all of my influence and watching me study for many years."

"I believe I have been able to set a wonderful example for my children in regards to their future life choices as well as their attitude towards school. And that is the most important aspect of all this!"

"My success as an undergrad has certainly affected my beliefs about myself and my life. It has made me believe that I can do anything. I am so proud of myself - and now my family is too. That is a wonderful feeling. Being a good role model for my daughter, however, will be the most

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Education Made The Difference

The employment experiences of PaS participants prior to entering college were very similar to the current experiences of individuals without a degree leaving welfare for work. PaS participants' successful completion of college is responsible for the substantial increases in their wages, employment benefits, and economic security. The median wage of PaS graduates prior to entering college --$8.00 per hour -- is similar to the median wage being earned by welfare leavers without a college degree -- $7.50 per hour.

In addition to similar wages, the two groups were clustered in similar types of employment. Over three-quarters (81.6%) of PaS participants were employed in sales, service, or clerical positions prior to entering college, and nearly the same percentage (78.1%) of welfare leavers without post-secondary education work in those types of jobs. Prior to entering college, 38.9% of PaS participants were employed in service positions, 28.3% in the retail industry, and 14.4% in clerical positions. Similarly, 46.7% of welfare leavers without a degree hold service-oriented positions, 17.3% work in clerical or administrative support, and 14.1% are employed in sales positions.

Finally, the loss of employment was a major causal factor for a family's need to obtain cash assistance for both sets of individuals. Among PaS participants, the 1999 survey showed that one of the most common reasons for seeking welfare assistance was a job-related change -- 36.9% reported that they needed assistance most recently due to the loss of employment, an inability to find a job, or a reduction in hours. Among welfare leavers who had been forced to return to welfare at some point in the past five years, the principal reason for their most recent return to TANF was also work-related; 37.7% required assistance because of the loss of a job or a reduction in pay or hours.

PaS participants appreciate how enormously an education can alter their life circumstances:

> *"I never thought I was smart enough to go to college . . . what distorted thinking that was! I realized I was actually quicker at getting things down than I thought. . . . All I needed was one small success after another to realize my worth."*
>
> *"As a case manager, I have had the opportunity to refer other people to the same programs I used to better my life. . . . Those programs allowed me to grow to where I am today and I feel that others should be allowed to do the same."*
>
> *"Graduating from college is a goal I never dreamed I would attain while growing up. Getting into school with the support of PaS began an exciting journey for me. . . . Attending school opened a door for me that will never be closed."*

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Implications for TANF Reauthorization

Maine's experience offers a powerful example of the value of a college education in moving families from reliance on TANF to economic self-sufficiency. PaS graduates earn more money, are offered better benefits, and report tremendous improvements in self-esteem and personal relations. Their success has a compounding positive effect as their children's aspirations rise. Moreover, as a result of PaS, Maine is deriving a more educated workforce to create a stronger tax base for its future.

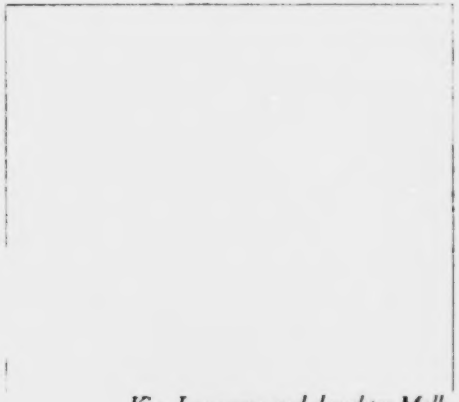
If a goal of the TANF program is to move people off of welfare permanently and into self-generated economic security, PaS proves that post-secondary education must become a countable activity for TANF participants. Programs now allowing post-secondary education rely heavily on state maintenance of effort dollars; this places great stress on these limited dollars in states like Maine. Maine spends approximately 40% of its maintenance of effort dollars on the PaS program.

"I know if it weren't for Parents as Scholars I would never have been able to attend college, afford child-care, or put food on the table. Today, I would most likely be stuck in a low-wage job I hated, barely getting by . . . . I can now give my children a future they deserve."
Parents as Scholars Graduate

Further, all of Maine's maintenance of effort dollars are budgeted now to meet critical needs of low-income families. This makes it difficult to increase opportunities available through the PaS program.

Moreover, this reliance solely on state dollars to provide access to education for families receiving welfare would place the program at grave risk if the state were to enter a budget crisis. Allowing states to count post-secondary education as a TANF activity and to use federal block grant dollars to support these activities would ensure broader access to this strategy, a strategy that has proven incredibly effective in reducing family poverty and decreasing dependence on welfare. Not all states have had the ability to utilize their state dollars to support education.

"PaS has made all the difference for me and my daughter Molly. Molly thinks it's great that we both have homework. We often do our homework together. Without PaS, I know I wouldn't be where I am today. Just a few years ago, I felt like my life was stalled. Now the difficulty I'm having is choosing between all the opportunities that are opening up in front of me." ***Kim Lawrence, Current Parents as Scholars Participant, University of Southern Maine***



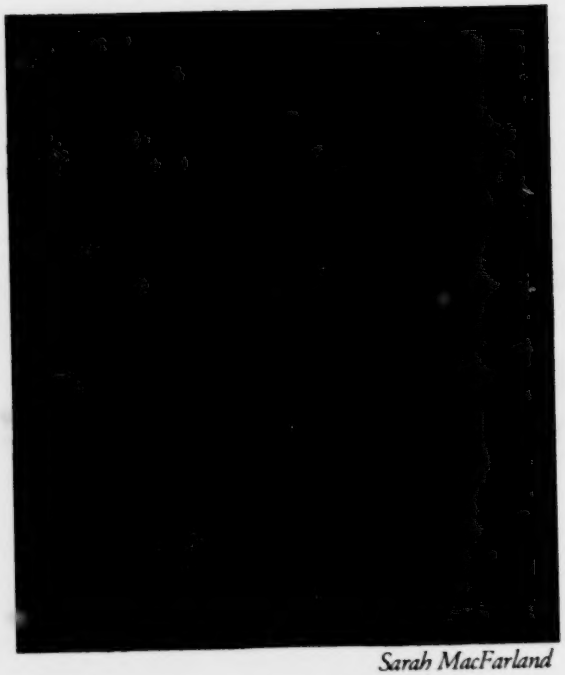
Kim Lawrence and daughter Molly

Giving states more flexibility with their TANF dollars would provide low-income families throughout the country greater equity in accessing this opportunity. Moreover, the public overwhelmingly favors helping low-income families to access education. Polls show broad support for government spending on education for individuals leaving welfare, even if it would require more spending to do so.[39]

Allowing education to count as a TANF activity will allow states to help low-income families break the cycle of poverty and instead realize a vision of hope.

"I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in the PaS program. I believe that without the PaS program I would not have had the chance to go to college to further my education. While I was attending college, I felt as though my life had finally come together. I had a chance to take over the destiny of my family." Parents as Scholars

"I will always be grateful to have had the opportunity to complete my education. That is the one factor that can keep me from sliding into hopeless poverty. In completing my degree, I know that I can do whatever it takes to go after my dreams." Parents as Scholars Graduate



Sarah MacFarland

"The endless possibilities and ideas I was exposed to through higher education have enabled me to think beyond my own needs and concerns to serve my community with passion and energy! I feel I have a powerful voice to use to help my children, myself, and others." ***Sarah MacFarland, Former Parents as Scholars Participant, 2000 University of Maine at Farmington Graduate***

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1. Education is the Top Priority for Republicans, Snowe Says, Maine Sunday Telegram, January 16, 2000, at 3B.

2. Tuition for state residents at the seven campuses of the University of Maine system ranges from $3,270 to $4,200 per year.

3. 22 M.R.S.A. § 3790(2).

4. Id. The law requires at least 20 hours of participation a week during the first 24 months. Because participants are required to go to school full-time and study time is counted, most students generally participate for more than 20 hours in their first 2 years of school.

5. Work-site experience includes paid employment, work study, practicums, internships, clinical placements, and laboratory or field work. 22 M.R.S.A. § 3790(3).

6. Maine Department of Human Services data show that the total TANF caseload decreased from 18,017 families in January 1997 to 10,401 families in September 2001.

7. For a history of the enactment of PaS in Maine, see Luisa S. Deprez and Sandra S. Butler, In Defense of Women's Economic Security: Securing Access to Higher Education Under Welfare Reform, Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, Summer 2001, at 210-27.

8. By the end of 2002, each state will risk losing a portion of its TANF block grant if it does not have 50% of all of its welfare families participating in countable work activities, which for a single-parent family requires a minimum of 30 hours per week. Although the "caseload reduction credit" significantly decreases the targeted participation rate, it continues to be a concern for state administrators and a driving force behind policy.

9. Julie Strawn, Mark Greenberg, and Steve Savner, Improving Employment Outcomes Under TANF, Center for Law and Social Policy (Washington, D.C.), February 2001, at 7.

10. Johanna Finney, Welfare Reform and Post-Secondary Education: Research and Policy Update, IWPR Welfare Reform Network News (Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, D.C.), April 1998, at 2.

11. Researchers Luisa S. Deprez and Sandra S. Butler have undertaken a longitudinal survey of PaS participants. In August 1999, they sent a 19-page survey to all 848 participants then taking part in PaS. The survey consisted of questions about the participants' current and past educational experiences, work and welfare-receipt histories, health and the health of their children, financial situations, child care circumstances, use of time in their daily lives, experiences in the PaS Program and with their postsecondary educational institution, and beliefs about how PaS had affected their lives. Just over one-quarter of the participants completed the first PaS survey. Nearly all the respondents provided their names and agreed to be contacted again. In June 2000, a one page follow-up survey was sent to the respondents to the 1999 PaS survey. And in November 2001, an 8-page survey was sent to the 127 respondents who could still be located. Of the first 54 (42.5%) returned surveys from the 2001 data collection reported on here, 34 individuals had already graduated. The remaining 20 respondents were either still in school or had left the PaS program. Only 8, however, had left PaS prior to graduating. Of those 8 individuals, 6 had left cash assistance completely for various reasons. The June 2000 follow-up found that only 17 of the 127 (13.4%) individuals who responded had left PaS prior to graduating.

12. The Maine Center for Economic Policy surveyed 3,500 individuals who were in receipt of TANF at some time in the first six months of 1997. The Center had conducted a similar survey in 1997. In 2001, they received 748 responses, of which 475 were leavers.

13. Aggregate data is reported using median results rather than mean, or average, results. Median results are less influenced by outlying high or low numbers and therefore give a more accurate picture of the experience of a particular group.

14. Ten respondents reported salaries that were translated into hourly wages for purposes of comparison.

15. Richard W. Stevenson, Fed Says Economy Increased New Worth of Most Families, New York Times, January 19, 2000, at A1, C6.

16. Francine D. Blau, Trends in the Well-Being of American Women, 1970-1995, 36 Journal of American Economic Literature 112, 131 (1998).

17. Sara Hebel, Education Department Report Notes a Quarter-Century of Strides by Women in Academe, Chronicle of Higher Education Daily News, April 26, 2000, at 1.

18. The survey question asked only which benefits the respondent was receiving; additional graduates may have been offered health or dental care but declined coverage due to its cost.

19. Andrew S. Gruber, Promoting Long-Term Self-Sufficiency for Welfare Recipients: Post-Secondary Education and the Welfare Work Requirement, 93 Northwestern University Law Review 247, 280 (1998).

20. Luisa S. Deprez and Sandra Butler, Higher Education: A Route out of Poverty For Women, On Campus with Women (Association of American Colleges and

Universities, Washington, D.C.), Fall 2001, at 8.

21. Sandra S. Butler and Luisa Deprez, Something Worth Fighting For: Higher Education for Women on Welfare, 17 Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work 30, 33 (2002).

22. Id. (citing M. Gittell, J. Gross, and J. Holdaway, Building Human Capital: The Impact of Postsecondary Education on AFDC Recipients in Five States, Report to the Ford Foundation, New York: Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, The City University of New York Graduate School, 1998; and Andrew S. Gruber, supra note 19).

23. Eileen Sweeney, Liz Schott, Ed Lazere, Shawn Fremstad, Heidi Goldberg, Jocelyn Guyer, David Super, and Clifford Johnson, Windows of Opportunity: Strategies to Support Families Receiving Welfare and Other Low-Income Families in the Next Stage of Welfare Reform, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Washington, D.C.), January 2000, at 33.

24. Kathleen Mullan Harris, Life After Welfare: Women, Work, and Repeat Dependency, 61 American Sociological Review 407, 416 (1996).

25. Id.

26. 30 and 1000: How to Build a Knowledge-Based Economy and Raise Incomes to the National Average by 2010, Maine State Planning Office, November 2001, at 4.

27. Id. at 16.

28. Id.

29. Maine Employment Outlook to 2008, Maine Department of Labor, July 2000, at 12.

30. Luisa Deprez and Sandra S. Butler, The Capabilities Approach and Women's Economic Security: Securing Access to Higher Education Under Welfare Reform, at 4 (unpublished manuscript) (citing Anthony P. Carnevale and Donna M. Desrochers, Getting Down to Business: Matching Welfare Recipients' Skills to Jobs that Train, Executive Summary (Educational Testing Services, Princeton, N.J.) 1999, at 8).

31. Deprez and Butler, supra note 7, at 219.

32. Butler and Deprez, supra note 21, at 37.

33. Erika Kates, Educational Pathways Out of Poverty: Responding to the Realities of Women's Lives, 66 American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 548, 552 (1996).

34. Id.

35. Id.

36. Peggy Kahn and Valerie Polakow, Struggling to Stay in School: Obstacles to Post-Secondary Education under the Welfare-to-Work Regime in Michigan, May 2000 at 4 (unpublished paper) (citing Gittell, Gross, and Holdaway, supra note 22, at 4; S. Pnadey and M. Zahn, Effect of Urban Poverty on Parent's Expectations of their Children's Achievement, 1 Advances in Social Work, 2000, at 107-25).

37. Peggy Kahn and Valerie Polakow, Struggling to Stay in School: Obstacles to Post-Secondary Education under the Welfare-to-Work Regime in Michigan, A Report Prepared for the Center for the Education of Women (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan) May 2000, at 69 (citing M. Gittell, Creating Social Capital at CUNY: A Comparison of Higher Education Programs for AFDC Recipients (Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, New York) 1996; America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being, Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (Washington, D.C.) 1997).

38. Kahn and Polakow, supra note 36, at 4 (citing Gittell, Gross, and Holdaway, supra note 22; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, supra note 37).

39. Surveys of public opinion confirm that the public understands the need for families to access higher education. Sarah Hebel, In a Shift, Most Americans Say They Value College Education, Chronicle of Higher Education Daily News, May 3, 2000 at 1 (noting that 87% of surveyed adults felt that a college degree is now as important as a high school degree once was). One study found that 8 in 10 Americans favored government spending on education for individuals leaving welfare, even if it would require more government spending. Richard Morin, What Americans Think, Washington Post Weekly Edition, May 29, 2000, at 34.

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Author(s): Rebekah J. Smith, Luisa S. Deprez, Sandra S. Butler

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